



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers October 8, 2007

Michigan News

2007 Wake Up Michigan Symposium

Michigan NETS member Steelcase, hosted the *2007 Wake Up Michigan Symposium* that took place on September 20, 2007, at their newly renovated Town Hall facilities in Grand Rapids. This day-long event sponsored by the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning, the Governors Traffic Safety Advisory Commission's Driver Behavior Action and the National Sleep Foundation focused on drowsy driving and other ways fatigue plays a role in the workplace and was the first of its kind in Michigan. One-hundred fifty professionals from businesses, governments, health and law enforcement agencies attended this symposium which featured a number of national sleep experts in the nation. View most of the presentations made at the symposium by linking to: <http://michigan.gov/michnets/0,1607,7-188-177363--,00.html>

Latest Traffic Safety News

Help Save Lives during NSF's Drowsy Driving Prevention Week!

Fifty five percent of all motor vehicle crashes in which the driver fell asleep involved drivers 25 years and under (Pack 1995). This sobering statistic is one of many that confirms young drivers are at increased risk of motor vehicle deaths. The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) is taking action by launching Drowsy Driving Prevention Week™ (DDPW) on November 5 - 11, 2007. DDPW is a far-reaching, public awareness and advocacy campaign developed to educate young drivers, their parents, and others about drowsy driving and its prevention. NSF is deeply committed to this crucial issue. The following link will provide you a wealth of resources to promote this campaign at your worksite:

http://www.sleepfoundation.org/site/c.lqLPIROCKtF/b.3264501/k.4D1C/Drowsy_Driving_Prevention_Week_2007.htm

Study: Worsening Congestion Affects Cities of All Sizes

Traffic congestion keeps getting worse in American cities, whether large or small. The problem leads to 4.2 billion lost hours and 2.9 billion gallons of fuel, costing \$78 billion a year, according to Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Urban Mobility Report. The report, using 2005 data, notes that the average traveler spends an extra 38 hours in traffic and uses an extra 26 gallons of fuel annually, which adds up to \$710 per traveler. Trips are taking longer, travel time is unreliable, and congestion is affecting more times of the day, weekends and rural areas. "We're never going to solve congestion with higher federal gas taxes or additional earmarks; instead, we need fresh approaches like new technology, congestion pricing and greater private sector investment to get America moving again," U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters said. Solutions such as adding capacity, relieving choke points and changing use patterns must be used together to be effective. For more information, go to <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/>

GM Works with Medical School to Pair Crash, Injury Data

The Advanced Automotive Safety Research Study, a partnership between General Motors, OnStar and the University of Michigan Medical School, seeks to match up crash and injury data. The study asks people who were involved in crashes to share their medical records with researchers who want to



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know how well restraint systems work in preventing injuries. "There is enormous life-saving potential in what we could learn from having real injury data that we can compare with data from a real-world crash," a GM vice president said. First responders could arrive to the scene already knowing what kind of injuries to expect from a certain type of crash. OnStar's Advanced Automatic Crash Notification helps in the process by automatically sending crash information to an OnStar advisor. Rollover crashes and the effectiveness of side-curtain air bags will be one focus of the study. For more information, go to http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/070926/gm_research.html?v=4

Drivers Volunteer To Test System that Charges by Mile

Starting in 2008 drivers from six states will test a system of paying for the miles they drive instead of paying a gas tax. Researchers from the University of Iowa Public Policy Center will fit 2,700 volunteers' cars with computers and satellite equipment that will track the miles they drive. Drivers will get samples of monthly bills for two years so they can compare what they pay in gas taxes to what they would have paid in per-mile fees. Oregon finished its own year-long experiment, and Minnesota and Colorado are considering similar tests. Because vehicles are getting better gas mileage, drivers are using fuels that have lower tax rates than gas, and politicians are reluctant to raise taxes, gas tax revenue isn't growing at the pace of the number of miles driven. Some experts think mile-based fees will replace gas taxes in the next 15 to 20 years, but privacy advocates are concerned about tracking drivers' movements. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-09-20-roads_N.htm Source: USA Today, September 20, 2007

Vehicle Weight Limits Don't Reflect Size of Average Americans

Americans may be growing too large for their cars. All 2006 or newer models must post a maximum weight for passengers and cargo, but they don't always reflect the size of average Americans. For example, two 200-pound adults would be over the weight limit of many two-seat sports cars. Most five-passenger cars are rated around 850 pounds—five 190 pound men (the nation's average) would be over the limit. The weight limits were required after the Firestone recall, when overloading contributed to the tires' failure. Some drivers say dealers should notify car buyers of the weight limit and post that figure on the window sticker, not the driver's side door frame. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2007-09-13-overloaded-cars_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip Source: USA Today, September 13, 2007

Association Releases Information about Drunk Driving Programs in Rural Communities

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) developed a resource that compiles effective programs in rural communities that help prevent impaired driving. The compendium profiles programs by local health departments and their approaches to address the problem, their successes and obstacles they encountered. For more information, go to <http://www.naccho.org/topics/hpdp/documents/impaireddrivingcompendium.pdf>

Smart Car Comes to America

The Smart car drew attention in Manhattan when it debuted there recently. The two-seat, \$12,000 car is just 8 feet, 8 inches long and 5 feet wide and gets 40 miles per gallon. It remains to be seen whether SUV-driving Americans will accept the tiny car or dismiss it as unsafe.

Source: Business Week, September 12, 2007



DUI Courts Effective, but More Research Needed To Find out Why

Drunk drivers are less likely to repeat their crimes when they go to DUI courts, wear electronic monitoring devices and sell their cars, according to a study from PIRE's Behavioral Health Research Center. But it is still unclear what aspects of the courts make them effective. "While evidence indicates that these court intervention programs and DUI courts reduce recidivism, few studies have tried to determine what exactly accounts for their success," the study's author said. Arrest rates declined 96 percent among offenders forced to sell their vehicles in a Portland, Ore. DUI court, and those with monitoring devices were four times less likely to drive drunk again. The study can be found in the October 2007 issue of *Addiction*. Source: *Join Together*, September 12, 2007

AAA Finds 5 Common Problems During Vehicle Inspections

Twenty-five AAA clubs inspected more than 6,000 vehicles and found that tire pressure was the No. 1 vehicle issue detected. To prevent a clogged air filter, the second most common issue, NAPA recommends replacing air filters as directed in the owner's manual to ensure better air flow and increase fuel efficiency. The third most common problem was insufficient tire tread depth, which should be checked by a depth gauge or penny. Issues with engine oil were the fourth most common problem. Dirty oil leads to engine wear, and low oil levels can lead to overheating, but regular oil changes will prevent those from happening. Worn-out windshield wiper blades came in fifth; they should be replaced about once a year or if they start streaking.

Volvo Introduces System that Alerts Distracted Drivers

Volvo has introduced "driver alert control" to help prevent the No. 1 cause of crashes—driver behavior. The system of cameras and radars monitor the car's movements and alert the driver if the car starts to get off track. Because many drivers don't recognize when they aren't alert, the car will even suggest taking a break. The technology also will be used to address rear-end crashes. If the car gets too close to the one in front of it, a warning light and audible signal will go off. If the driver doesn't pay attention to the warnings, the brakes will be pre-charged. The brakes will then activate if no other action is taken. For more information, go to <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/238265.aspx>

Source: Christian Broadcasting Network, September 25, 2007

Foreign Drivers Find it Hard to Kick Driving Habits of Home Country

In culturally diverse areas such as Houston, foreign drivers are finding it a challenge to adapt to the rules of the road. As immigrants come to the U.S., they bring their driving habits with them. One of the biggest challenges driving instructors have is making foreign students understand that laws are not merely suggestions. "Most other countries, aside from Europe, don't have the rules and regulations, whereas we have plenty of rules and regulations," one instructor said. Asian drivers might be used to staying below 30 miles per hour, and for women from Saudi Arabia, driving is a completely new experience. In Texas driving instruction is approved to be taught only in English and Spanish, though there is a demand for other languages. For more information, go to

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/headline/metro/5158504.html>

Source: Houston Chronicle, September 24, 2007

Ford Gets in Sync with Tech-Savvy Drivers

Ford is partnering with Microsoft to offer Sync, a system that features hands-free calling, voice-activated music selection and text messages drivers can hear. The \$395 option is powered by software that can be upgraded to work with future cell phones and music players. Sync is available in about a dozen Ford, Lincoln and Mercury vehicle models that appeal to the 18- to 35-year-old demographic. The voice-recognition capability is impressive; using verbal commands, drivers can tell their music players to play a particular artist, song or genre. The system also reads text messages out



loud and allows drivers to respond with several short replies from the display. Although similar systems are becoming more popular as states are cracking down on handheld cell phone use, safety experts say they still can be distracting. For more information, go to

<http://www.latimes.com/services/site/premium/access-registered.intercept>

Source: Los Angeles Times, September 22, 2007

News from USDOT

NHTSA, China Agree on Auto Safety Standards

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and China came to an agreement to improve their relationship regarding vehicle safety and enforcement standards. "We are strengthening the lines of communication and cooperation to improve the safety of vehicles and automotive equipment in both our countries," NHTSA Administrator Nicole R. Nason said. The signed agreement sets a range of goals, such as developing and enforcing safety standards for equipment. It also encourages developing consumer information and sharing safety research and efforts to improve fuel economy.

Safety Belt, Motorcycle Helmet Use Increases in United States

More people are wearing their safety belts than ever before, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's annual occupant protection survey. The belt use rate increased 1.2 percentage points to 82.4 percent, meaning 3 million more Americans wore safety belts last year. Motorcycle helmet use also rose 7 percentage points to 58 percent, according to the National Occupant Protection Use Survey: 2007. "Our efforts are resulting in more Americans taking interest in their own safety and wearing seatbelts and helmets more," Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters said.

NHTSA Acts Fast to Get Regulations, Revisions in Place

Nicole Nason, chief of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), pledged to introduce new school bus safety regulations soon, in addition to New Car Assessment Program and child safety seat "ease of use" rating system revisions. A working group also will propose tailpipe emissions limits by the end of the year; that regulation will be final by the end of 2008. The new rules on school bus safety follow a July forum that was called after reports of a number of fatal bus crashes. NHTSA is trying to act more quickly on the regulations and revisions to reverse a reputation for talking about issues but being slow to take action. For more information, go to

<http://www.detroitnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070920/AUTO01/709200330/1148>

Source: Detroit News, September 20, 2007

Work-Home

Safety Laws Contribute to North Carolina's Reduction in Child Deaths

Child deaths in North Carolina are falling, and some of the credit goes to bicycle helmet and child safety seat laws. Since 1991, deaths among children ages 17 and younger have decreased 31 percent. "When a new law is passed, a lot of parents say, 'Another safety law?'" said the executive director of the policy group that released the report. "Well, this is why. They do work." The big gains are in accidental injuries: In the early 1990's there were about 12 to 14 bicycle fatalities a year, but since the helmet law went into effect in 2001, that number is now six or seven. For more information, go to <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/story/707644.html>

Source: The (Raleigh) News & Observer, September 18, 2007



Study: High-speed Motorcycles Riskier than Other Models

The latest issue of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's (IIHS) Status Report magazine examines the safety of high-performance motorcycles. New analyses show that supersports have a death rate that's nearly four times higher than any other type of motorcycle. They also have the worst overall insurance losses because of crashes and theft. Supersports are popular with younger bikers and are built for speed; speeding and driver error were the biggest factors in fatal crashes involving the high-performance motorcycles. "Supersport motorcycles have such elevated crash death rates and insurance losses because many people ride them as if they were on a racetrack," said IIHS's senior vice president for research. For more information, go to <http://www.iihs.org/news/rss/pr091107.html>

Source: IIHS, September 11, 2007

Traffic Lights Don't Always Give Seniors Enough Time to Get Across the Road

Many traffic signals do not give older pedestrians enough time to cross the road, according to a study from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. In intersections where signals were timed according to federal standards, more than 15 percent of senior pedestrians would not have time to cross. In the study of six communities, pedestrians 65 and older tended to walk half a foot per second slower than younger pedestrians. The study provides research that could be used when the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices is up for revision in 2009. Researchers found that signal timing can be modified without causing excessive traffic delays.

Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, September 19, 2007

International Traffic Safety News

Commission Asks Fleets for Feedback about Speed Limiters

The Commission for Integrated Transport is researching the benefits of fitting speed limiters to company cars and wants input from fleets. The commission wants to know what effect voluntarily introducing the speed limiters would have on reducing deaths, injuries and carbon emissions on UK roads. A report will be issued next year that outlines the benefits of the Intelligent Speed Adaptation systems. "Companies will want to fit them because why would any business want to allow its employees to break the law?" the commission chairman said. Speed limiters might be more effective in residential areas where speed cameras would be too expensive. But there could be a downside: "Introducing a scheme of this nature may discourage drivers from selecting company cars and lead to them instead opting for a cash alternative," the managing director of LeasePlan said. "This cash allowance could then be used to purchase an older and possibly higher polluting vehicle with no limiter restrictions." Source: FleetNewsNet, September 20, 2007

UK Drivers May Face Stiffer Sentences for Using Cell Phones

UK drivers who use a cell phone in the car could spend at least two years in prison if proposed changes are made to the law. Drivers currently receive a fine and a minimum of three penalty points. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will issue guidelines for prosecutors this fall. Under the new rules, a cell-phone using driver involved in a fatal crash would face 14 years in prison. "We accept that in cases where there is clear evidence that danger has been caused by their use, such as texting while driving, then our policy should spell out the starting point for charging – dangerous driving," said the CPS director of public prosecutions. Industry groups are backing the proposed changes.

Source: FleetNewsNet, September 12, 2007



European Group Calls for Cars that are Safe, Smart, Green

The European Commission has announced plans to negotiate with European and Asian automotive associations to offer eCall, an in-vehicle emergency system, as a standard option in all new cars starting in 2010. Its goal is to cut traffic deaths in half by 2010 by creating safer drivers, vehicles and infrastructure. The commission's "Intelligent Car Communication" outlines three main priorities, including crash avoidance technology such as eCall and electronic stability control. To make travel greener, the commission will introduce a plan next year to roll out technology that would reduce CO2 emissions. For smarter cars, the commission calls on its partners to develop a standard interface that would connect mobile navigation devices with other integrated systems. For more information, go to http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3602

iCar Quiz Informs Drivers about New Technologies

The European Commission developed the iCar quiz so drivers can check what kind of technologies their car currently has and what other safety options exist. To take the quiz, go to http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/intelligentcar/quiz/index_en.htm

Mercedes-Benz Drivers Can Send Directions Directly to Vehicle

Mercedes-Benz's new Search & Send program will allow drivers to find restaurants or stores using Yahoo or Google and then send directions directly to their cars. After drivers find their destinations online or via cell phone, they can click the "send to car" icon to transmit information to the vehicle's GPS navigation system. The directions are retrieved by pushing a button on the dashboard. Drivers won't be charged a fee for Search & Send, but they must subscribe to Tele Aid, Mercedes-Benz's in-car safety system that costs \$240 a year. The program will be available in certain 2007 and 2008 models and will expand to all U.S. models in the future. Source: San Jose Mercury News, September 17, 2007

Company Provides Safety Systems for New Vehicle Model

A provider of vehicle safety systems, TRW Automotive Holdings Corp., is working with auto manufacturers to bring integrated safety technologies to a variety of vehicle applications. The company is providing the platform for the safety functions on a European mid-class model. It will feature TRW's electronic stability control, electrically powered steering, lane departure warning and steering torque control. The vehicle also will launch TRW's first video camera technology. All of the systems will work together to keep the vehicle on the road and in its lane. "The combination of active braking, steering, suspension and driver assist systems helps to open a world of possibilities for vehicle safety that is fast becoming a reality in today's vehicle market," TRW's president and CEO said.

Organizations Promote Optional Vehicle Safety Features

Vehicle safety systems abound these days, but most are optional and not legally required. The Fleet Safety Forum produced a brochure to explain the systems that are available. A national campaign also seeks to promote the benefits of electronic stability control (ESC), because cars with the safety feature are 25 percent less likely to be in a fatal crash. Insurance research centers, government agencies and safety organizations back the "Choose ESC" campaign. Source: FleetNewsNet, September 18, 2007

Increased Penalties Point to Importance of Checking Drivers' Records

The United Kingdom's Road Safety Act introduces several new offenses and increased penalties, making it crucial for fleet managers to check employees' driver licenses. In the past, motorists have claimed someone else was driving in a crash to avoid points on their licenses, so the penalty points for failing to provide information about the identity of a speeding driver will increase from three to six. Employees could be banned from driving after two offenses. "Driving licenses of prospective employees should be checked against the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) database at



the recruitment stage and a reporting system to check the licenses of existing employees is essential," the manager of a fleet management firm said. Source: FleetNewsNet, September 25, 2007

UK Committee Recommends Changes Regarding Teen Drivers, but are They Enough?

The United Kingdom's House of Commons transport committee is recommending changes to the way teen drivers are trained, and businesses are taking note. The recommendations include raising the minimum driving age to 18, enacting a complete alcohol ban for new drivers and prohibiting novice drivers from carrying passengers at night. The Fleet Safety Association suggests increasing the minimum age to 24 when drivers are shown to be more mature and wonders how passenger limits would be enforced. The association also thinks driver training needs to be more engaging and instill teens with a sense of pride and social responsibility. Lastly, the group says insurance companies should pay for the driver training because they have a vested interest in teen drivers' safety.

Source: FleetNewsNet, September 25, 2007

India Seeks To Track Cars To Reduce Congestion

India is considering mandating cars manufactured in the country to come equipped with radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags. The tags would help manage traffic, track and identify motorists who commit violations and automatically charge drivers who enter a toll area. An increase of cars and decrease in the use of public transportation has led to congestion, more traffic deaths and poor air quality. If cars had tags, drivers easily could be charged special rates for entering highly congested areas. Singapore and Malaysia have similar systems. For more information, go to http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Automobiles/Cars_set_to_roll_out_with_radio_frequency_tags/articleshow/2400251.cms Source: The Economic Times, September 25, 2007

Canadians Report Increase in Aggressive Driving

More than 2 million Canadians exhibit aggressive driving behaviors, and Canadians think those behaviors are becoming more common, according to a poll by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF). "Aggressive driving is a broad issue that includes behaviors like excessive speeding, running red lights, honking the horn, taking risks for fun while driving, and, in the extreme, physical violence," a TIRF research associate said. Many of the poll respondents admitted to speeding, and 670,000 said they take risks just for the fun of it. Men were twice as likely as women to drive aggressively, and younger drivers were more likely to honk their horn. The poll found that the most aggressive drivers had the most traffic citations. The results can be found in The Road Safety Monitor 2006: Aggressive Driving at www.trafficinjuryresearch.com